In Memory of A Friend

by Mutsunokami

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><font> The light of the early morning shone down upon a Union dropship sitting on the landing pad. A gathering of people milled around the entrance of the dropship, waiting for the ceremony to begin. This is not an ordinary ceremony. This ceremony is being held to honor the memory of a man who served on that dropship almost fifty years ago. Among the gathered are the survivors of his shipmates, family and friends, and several officers of the AFFS along with the current crew of the Liberator. Services begin with a speech by the man's son, telling about the good times with his father and how he entered the AFFS and became a gunner like his father. The man's wife stands up at the podium now, silent for a moment with tears running down her face. She speaks of her feelings when her husband had first signed up for the _Liberator_, and his dreams to be a dropship captain. She tells of how he finally left the service not as a captain, but as a master gunner. She breaks down and is led to her seat by her eldest daughter. Many of the man's old shipmates come up, one after another, telling tales about how the man saved their lives time and again with his ability to keep enemy fighters off of their dropship, how his mechanical knowledge kept the failing life support operating through their worst moments, and how he personally held off a squad of enemy infantry from taking the command bridge.

After they are done speaking, an officer steps up to the podium. He gives a short speech about the man's bravery in combat and his shining example to the AFFS. The officer then talks breifly about the

man's long life and finally about the man's final, losing battle with cancer. He steps down and the first of the singers begins a slow song about memories and good friends, and waiting for each other on the other side. The next singer comes up and sings of heroes and great deeds accomplished, her rich contralto touching every heart. Finally, the man's grandson steps up to the podium and reads out the man's favorite poem, The Charge of The Light Brigade. A sergeant gives a signal, and seven infantry in dress uniform stand at ready. They aim their rifles toward the sky and fire, giving the 21-gun Salute. There is not a dry eye at the ceremony. The gathering disperses and crews return to their duty on this day of days, this Memorial Day.

In Memory of Andrew E. McCualsky, 1924 - 1999
><font>Waist Gunner, B-24 Liberator<font>

"Ceiling and visibility unlimited. Happy flying, Andy"

End file.